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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 6607

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, PGOV, BL
SUBJ: PRESIDENT BANZER ANNOUNCES CHANGES IN ELECTORAL CALENDAR FOR 1975

REF: LA PAZ 6192, 5786

1. IN A SPEECH TO THE NATION ON THE EVENING OF OCTOBER 8, PRESIDENT BANZER ANNOUNCED SEVERAL MAJOR CHANGES IN THE PROJECTED ELECTORAL CALENDAR FOR 1975. BANZER CANCELLED THE NATIONAL REFERENDUM ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 1975 AND ANNOUNCED THAT THE NEW PRESIDENT OF BOLIVIA WILL TAKE OFFICE ON AUGUST 6, 1975, THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF BOLIVIAN INDEPENDENCE. IN ADDITION, BANZER REITERATED HIS "DEFINITE AND IRREVERSIBLE" DECISION NOT TO BE A CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY IN 1975. THE PRESIDENT FURTHER ANNOUNCED THAT A REVIEW COMMISSION WILL SHORTLY BE FORMED, CHARGED WITH THE PREPARATION OF A NEW ELECTORAL LAW WITHIN THE SPACE OF THIRTY DAYS.

2. BANZER'S SPEECH GAVE PARTICULAR EMPHASIS TO HIS DETERMINATION TO GOVERN WITH A FIRM HAND UNTIL HE TURNS OVER THE GOVERNMENT TO A NEW PRESIDENT ON AUGUST 6, 1975. RECENT ACTIVITIES IN LA PAZ WHICH HAVE BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO
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LEFTIST EXTREMISTS INCLUDED THE PAINTING OF CITY WALLS WITH

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THE SLOGANS "ELN", "MIR" AND "GRUPO ALLENDE" ON THE NIGHT OF
OCTOBER 7, PLUS THE DESTRUCTION OF THE STATUE OF PRESIDENT
KENNEDY IN LA PAZ BY A DYNAMITE EXPLOSION ON OCTOBER 8. THE
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HAS ANNOUNCED THE CAPTURE OF SUSPECTS
INVOLVED IN BOTH INCIDENTS, CLAIMING THAT THEIR ACTIONS
WERE CARRIED OUT IN HOMAGE TO THE DEATH OF ERNESTO "CHE"
GUEVARA ON OCTOBER 8, 1967. ACCORDING TO THE MINISTRY,
EXILED LEFTIST LEADER MAJOR RUBEN SANCHEZ GAVE THE INSTRUCTIONS
FOR THE DYNAMITING OF THE KENNEDY STATUE. ON THE EVENING
OF OCTOBER 8, MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AGENTS ARRESTED EIGHT
PERSONS ATTENDING A MEETING OF THE PDC-PRA-MNRI ALLIANCE,
INCLUDING MNRI LEADERS ANIBAL AGUILAR AND RAMON CLAURE
WHO RECENTLY ENTERED THE COUNTRY BY CLANDESTINE MEANS.

3. COMMENT: PRESIDENT BANZER'S SPEECH, COUPLED WITH THE
ACCOMPANYING REVELATIONS BY THE INTERIOR MINISTRY OF RECENT
LEFTIST ACTIVITIES, SHOULD STRENGTHEN THE GOVERNMENT'S
HAND IN TWO MAJOR RESPECTS. THE ACCELERATION OF THE 1975
ELECTORAL TIMETABLE, COUPLED WITH BANZER'S APPARENTLY FIRM
DECISION NOT TO BE A CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY,
CUTS THE GROUND FROM UNDER THOSE MILITARY OFFICERS WHO
WERE CONCERNED THAT BANZER PLANNED TO USE THE LENGTHY ELECTORAL
CALENDAR TO MANIPULATE HIS OWN CONTINUATION IN OFFICE.
ACCORDING TO A VARIETY OF EMBASSY SOURCES MINISTER OF
URBAN AFFAIRS AND HOUSING PATINO AYOROA HAD BEEN TAKING
THIS LINE IN RECENT WEEKS AS A MEANS OF ADVANCING HIS OWN
PERSONAL AMBITIONS WITHIN THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. AT THE
SAME TIME, THE DRAMATIC EVIDENCE OF CONTINUING EXTREMIST
ACTIVITY PROVIDED BY THE DESTRUCTION OF THE KENNEDY STATUE
HAS MET WITH UNANIMOUS REPUDIATION FROM CIVIC GROUPS
AND PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS IN LA PAZZ.

4. BANZER'S SPEECH STILL LEAVES OPEN TWO QUESTIONS WHICH
WILL CONTINUE TO BE SUBJECTS OF POLITICAL DEBATE IN THE
COMING WEEKS: THE EXACT DATE FOR NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN 1975
AND THE POSSIBILITY OF GRANTING AN AMNESTY TO THE NUMEROUS
POLITICAL EXILES. ON THE FIRST QUESTION, THERE IS A GENERAL
CONSENSUS IN LA PAZ POLITICAL CIRCLES THAT THE ELECTIONS
WILL BE HELD ON A SUNDAY IN MAY OR JUNE 1975, MOST LIKELY
IN THE LATTER MONTH. THE GOVERNMENT ALSO HAS PARTIALLY
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CLARIFIED THE AMNESTY QUESTION IN RECENT WEEKS BY DECLARING,
THROUGH MINISTER OF INTERIOR PEREDA ASBUN, THAT AN
UNCONDITIONAL AMNESTY WILL NOT BE GRANTED, WHILE THE CONCEPT
OF A PARTIAL AMNESTY REMAINS UNDER STUDY.
STEDMAN

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